

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name Veena Kapadia and I am from Guilford, CT. I am an employee of Fair Haven Community Health Care and co-founder of Flore Foundation, which furthers economic opportunities for resettled refugees supporting entrepreneurship and employment.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. Eventually, it is our responsibility to be sure every person, including immigrants of any age, has open access to HUSKY and healthcare.

This is an incredibly important issue for future generations of Americans. Not only is access to care, a basic human right, but it plays a major role in lifting people out of poverty and opening doors to education. As the mother of two young children I cannot imagine weighing options of taking my sick child to the doctor or paying for housing or food. Encouraging parents to seek preventative care is beneficial to our entire community. With these services, children are vaccinated, remain healthier and identify and treat medical problems earlier saving cost.

My work with resettled refugees has broadened my perspective on this issue. For this population who we need to welcome with open arms, they arrive with the debt of their travel costs that they have a limited time to pay back. Due to their circumstance, they begin live anew with no access to finance among the many other barriers. Mothers have many burdens of trying to get their children into school not knowing any English. Many of these women have never been allowed an education themselves, yet, they may be seeking work outside the home for the first time. Ultimately, preventative care keeps children in school so their parents may work. Healthcare should not be a worry for these people who have been through trauma and turmoil. Moreover, among the newest arrivals many served the United States Armed Forces or dedicated their lives to ideals that we Americans hold dear. For these people, their displacement is a result of aligning with us. We have a responsibility to take care of these families.

Passage of SB284 would extend the benefits already given to the youngest children in these families to those with children up to the age of 18. It is critical for our society to develop and educate this school aged population to give these families the opportunities to create the *American Dream*. Being healthy is integral to contributing to our communities and resettled refugees contend with a variety of barriers from language to childcare and simply understanding American workforce culture. What amazes me most is the number of successful entrepreneurs that rise out of this population. Immigrants as a whole make up a far greater number of entrepreneurs in the United States than people that have lived here for generations, contributing immensely to the size and prosperity of our economy. Healthcare should not be a barrier to make this path to a sustainable livelihood for refugees and all immigrant families more difficult. This bill is a key step to eliminating obstacles for families.

In closing, I support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Veena S Kapadia

Veena Kapadia
Resident of Guilford, CT